

Wool Handling During a Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Outbreak

Virus Survival

How long can FMD virus survive in wool?

- FMD virus (FMDV) is more stable at lower temperatures, in organic matter such as manure or dirt, and when protected from sunlight.
- Reported survival times are approximately two months at 39°F (4°C). Survival time decreases with higher temperatures.
- There are no USDA-approved tests for detection of FMDV in wool (as of March 2021).

Storage

How can FMD virus be killed in wool?

- Clean the wool and equipment to remove contamination.
- Bale/bag wool in waterproof plastic and clean the outside of each bale/bag.
- Store bales/bags in a biosecure area for **at least** the time and temperatures listed. Keep accurate records of bale/bag identification, storage times and temperatures:
 - 39.2°F (4°C) for four months, or
 - 64.4°F (18°C) for four weeks, or
 - 98.6°F (37°C) for eight days.

Traceability

Why is traceability of wool bales/bags so important?

- Bales/bags should be uniquely identified and the wool not sorted or re-baled.
- Accurate, complete records of wool movements are critical to manage an FMD outbreak.
- It is possible that FMDV-infected sheep could be shorn and their wool stored or moved before the flock is diagnosed.

Disposal

If wool cannot be moved in an outbreak, what are some disposal options?

- Burial or composting small amounts.
- Burning/incineration requires high temperatures and may not be publicly acceptable.
- All options must meet local and state environmental regulations.

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